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AUTHOR Franklin, Joan E.; Freeland, D. Kim
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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study using survey research techniques investigated the degree to which managerial philosophy was related to training and development professionals' acceptance and practice of those adult learning principles that support the collaborative teaching-learning mode. Data were collected from a random sample of 400 members of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), with a 31 percent rate of return (124 respondents). The variable of teaching style was measured by the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS). The variable of managerial philosophy was assessed by five multiple choice managerial questions derived from McGregor's (1960) theoretical framework of Theory X and Y assumptions. In general, the respondents were approximately equally distributed by gender, with a model age between 35-44. More than half the respondents had taught for 6-10 years. The most frequently reported organizational size was between 100 and 999 employees, and Theory Y was the most predominately reported management philosophy. A significant difference was detected in the acceptance and practice of collaborative techniques by managerial philosophy. The study concluded that the most effective trainers were persons with a Theory Y-orientation to management as well as 16 or more years experience in teaching adults, much of which was obtained in large organizations (over 20,000 employees). The higher the level of education the trainer has, the more collaborative he/she tends to be. (KC)

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Joan E. Franklin, Ph.D.
Graduate Professor (HRMD), Chapman College
27 MSSZ/MSE, CANNON AIR FORCE BASE, NM 88103-5000
(505) 784-5512

D. Kim Freeland, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Eastern New Mexico University
Dept. HPE, Station 17
Portales, NM 88130
(505) 562-2236

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Abstract

This descriptive study utilizing survey research techniques investigated the degree to which managerial philosophy was related to training and development professionals' acceptance and practice of those adult learning principles which support the collaborative teaching-learning mode. A significant difference was detected in the acceptance and practice of collaborative techniques by managerial philosophy.

HRD & Philosophy

The current focus on human resource development (HRD) has placed priority demands upon training and development professionals who are now recognized as managers and facilitators of adult learning. No longer can many organizations place HRD as a peripheral activity. It is now recognized as a vital tool for organizational growth and must demand a central priority in all its planning strategies. In Lippitt's Organization Renewal HRD should be planned, designed, and supervised by those who are prepared by education, practice, skill, and ethics--trainers, adult educators, counselors, consultants, or teachers. The use of planning strategies for HRD training depend upon the attitudes of facilitators and managers of adult learning.

Professional managers and trainers develop personally favored philosophies. Philosophy helps to provide a meaningful context in which to place the self in relation to the job of managing human resources. Understanding one's own philosophical orientation is one factor that distinguishes a professional trainer from a novice. Thoughtful trainers know not only what they ought to do, but why

they are to do it. The above statement supports the assumption that HRD professionals should have available information relative to their managerial philosophies, their perceptions about human nature and organizational effectiveness, and their assumptions about adult learning style. Awareness of relationships among these elements could benefit HRD training professionals in the pursuit of their own cognitive and affective development and their efforts to effect dynamic HRD programs. It may also provide clearer insights into the nature of specified settings of adult learning.

This Study

This study was descriptive in nature and used a survey method to obtain responses from a systematic sample of the target population: National members of the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD). The dependent variable was the trainer's teaching style. The predictor variable was the managerial philosophy the trainer had toward the trainee. General demographic information for the trainers included size of the organization, age, formal education, major area of study, and years spent teaching adults. The null hypothesis for this

study tested the degree to which managerial philosophy was related to training professionals acceptance of the collaborative teaching-learning mode.

Data were collected from members of the national (ASTD). It included 23,000 practitioners, managers, administrators, educators, and researchers in the field of human resource development. This population is spread across nine geographic regions of the United States with more than 140 local chapters. A systematic random sampling of 400 subjects were taken from this membership. The sample consisted of 124 respondents, representing a 31% return rate. The dependent variable of teaching style was measured by the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS). The variable of managerial philosophy was assessed by five multiple choice managerial questions derived from McGregor's (1960) theoretical framework of Theory X and Y assumptions. The analysis utilized the t-test.

PALS developed by Conti, Adult Literacy and Basic Education is a 44-item summative scale based on principles in the adult education literature. It gives an indication of an instructor's overall performance for teaching behavior in an adult

education setting. High scores on PALS reflect a learner-centered approach to the teaching-learning transaction. Low scores on PALS denote a preference for the teacher-centered approach in which authority resides with the instructor. It contains the seven factors of Learner Centered Activities, Personalizing Instruction, Relating to Experience, Assessing Student Needs, Climate Building, Participation in the Learning Process, and Flexibility for Personal Development. Most of these factors are of critical consideration to today's trainer as programs are being developed for adults.

The instrument that assessed the philosophical orientation of the trainer for the trainee was a five item questionnaire constructed by the researchers that ascertained the Theory X or Theory Y orientation. The theoretical framework used was McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y assumptions. All of the question stems reflected the domain of trainer assumptions about trainees and their learning. Each of the five question stems required a choice from among four responses. A panel and a pilot study for this instrument was conducted respectively. For construct validity the analysis yielded .86; p,.0001

using the Kendal W. For the reliability of the instrument the analysis yielded r=.77 using the unequal-length Spearman-Brown coefficient. This 5-item questionnaire on managerial philosophy (attitudinal data) was considered to have attained acceptable reliability.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

Profile Summary

In general, the sample of this study was approximately equally distributed by gender with a model age between 35-44. Nearly twice as many males as females held a master's degree with a plurality (41.3%) of those degrees obtained in the field of education. A plurality of respondents (37.7%) had taught adults for 6-10 years. The most frequently reported organizational size was 100-999 employees, and Theory Y was the most predominantly reported management philosophy.

The Hypothesis

The t-test for independent means was used to test the hypothesis that PALS scores of professional trainers were significantly different according to the status of their managerial philosophy (X or Y).

A significant difference was detected in the distribution of the total PALS scores among groups differentiated by managerial philosophy. Using pooled variance, the t value obtained was t=-3.06; p=.003. Because significance was reached on the test of hypothesis, seven factor scores were also tested for differences between managerial philosophy groups. Significant differences were detected for four of the PALS factors: Relating to Experience, Assessing Student Needs, Climate Building, and Participation in the Learning Process. The Y oriented trainers scored higher in all remaining factors even though significance was not reached. The current literature in HRD points to the processes of trainers relating learning to the experience of the trainee as one of the most efficient strategies in adult programming. It is interesting that this study acknowledges and is practicing the new research on adult education in the business setting.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to contribute a greater understanding of the nature of adult teaching in specific settings that can lead to improvements in organization-wide Human Resource Development

programs. One of the contributions this study provided was an awareness of the importance of a trainer's philosophical orientation, his/her perceptions about learners, and his/her assumptions about learning style. Awareness of relationships among these elements will benefit HRD trainers and their efforts to effect dynamic HRD programs. This study achieved its purpose to provide clearer insights into the nature of specific learning settings for adults.

The information about the characteristics of trainers and their approach to training provided by this research provides clues for increasing the effectiveness of an organization's human resource development programs and, hence, of its profitability. This research indicates that adults learn better under collaborative learning conditions. Business/industry can improve productively by employing those trainers most likely to establish those conditions in the learning setting. This study provides a profile of that effective trainer--he/she has a Theory Y-orientation to management and has had 16 or more years experience in teaching adults, much of which was obtained in a large organization (over

20,000). The higher level of education the trainer has the more collaborative he/she tends to be; more participation is allowed by the learner and flexibility for personal development is encouraged.

The challenge to those of us desiring to meet the critical problem of developing effective HRD systems to meet the changing needs of today's society is less ambiguous. We know where our national trainers are in terms of philosophy and its impact on training and we know which philosophy is most widely used today. This understanding places us in a unique position as human resource developers to meet the challenge of the active, involving, and evolving process of training.